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NOTES TAKEN FROM TRANSCRIPTS
OF MEETINGS OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF,
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1962,
DEALING WITH THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS
(Handwritten notes were made in 1976 and
typed in 1993)

CJCS: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Maxwell D.
Taylor, USA.

CSA: Chief of Staff, Army. General Earle G. Wheeler.

CSAF: Chief of Staff, Air Force. General Curtis E. LeMay.

CNO: Chief of Naval Operations. Admiral George W. Anderson, Jr.

CMC: Commandant, Marine Corps. General David M. Shoup.

CONAD: Continental Air Defense

DIA: Defense Intelligence Agency

3: Director, Joint Staff

LANT: Atlantic

NORAD: North American Air Defense

OAS: Organization of American States

RCT: Regimental Combat Team

SAM: Surface-to-Air Missile

TAC: Tactical Air Command

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Monday, 15 October

JCS met at 1400; SecDef and DepSecDef joined them at 1430:

Discussion of JCS 2304/68, contingency planning for Cuba:

JCS: If OPLAN 316's requirement for an airborne assault after five days' preparation is to be met, the Marine RCT must move from Camp Pendleton to the East Coast.

SecDef: President wants no military action within the next three months, but he can't be sure as he does not control events. For instance, aerial photos made available this morning show 68 boxes on ships that are not believed to be H-28s and cannot be identified. However, the probabilities are strongly against military action in the next 30 days.

Discussion of JCS 2304/69, which deals with preparations necessary to execute oplans:

SecDef: I suggest we use [

] We can't do what the British and French did over Suez-- say we will take action, then do nothing while a long buildup is completed. We can't do nothing during the 18-day preparatory period for OPLAN 314 while the enemy prepares and world pressure mounts. So I suggest that [

] CNO: A Marine RLT would have to be moved from the West Coast; that requires 20 days' notice and an 18-day voyage.

SecDef: We would not mobilize reserve air squadrons until air strikes begin. All present agreed.

CSA: The thing about OPLAN 314 that bothers me is that we []

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SecDef: []

CNO: []

SecDef: [] We should bring this problem to the President's attention as soon as possible. []

[] JCS agreed with him that a briefing should be prepared for the President outlining these two alternatives.

Tuesday, 16 October

JCS meeting at 1000:

CJCS says he will see the President at 1145.

Briefing by Mr. McLaughlin of DIA: 3 SS-3 sites located; MRBMs could have ranges of either 700 or 1100 miles; all-out effort could make them operational within 24 hours.

VCSAF (Gen. Seth McKee): Once the missile sites become operational, Castro can threaten retaliation for any offensive move by the US. Delaying action until the missiles are set up could touch off nuclear war.

CMC: Soviets might be attempting to pose a nuclear threat to the US without running a risk of nuclear retaliation against the Soviet Union.

JCS agree the threat is so serious as to require the US to take out the missiles by military effort.

CSA favored air attack without warning, to be followed by invasion.

CNO recommended air attack followed by invasion as the only way to eliminate the Communist regime from Cuba. Once the missiles

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were removed, however, he did not see a Communist Cuba as a military threat.

JCSAF foresaw a possibility of avoiding the need for invasion by efficient application of air strikes and naval blockade.

CJCS: I am not convinced that air strikes need be followed by an invasion. What threat is Cuba once missiles and aircraft are knocked out?

CMC favored an ultimatum to remove the missiles or the US would destroy them.

JCS agreed that the recommended sequence would be: get additional intelligence; make surprise attacks on missiles, airfields, PT boats, SAMs and tanks; concurrently, reinforce Guantanamo; prepare to initiate an invasion.

JCS meeting at 1630 attended by Adm. Dennison (CINCLANT), Gen. Power (CINCSAC), Gen. Sweeney (CG, TAC) and LTG Hamilton Howze (CG, XVIII Abn Corps):

CJCS gives a debrief of the 1145 White House meeting: President gave unlimited authority to use U-2 reconnaissance. Rusk said he was not certain that the MRBMs were in Cuba. SecDef, after being briefed on JCS recommendation, was with us except on one point: We should strike before any of the missiles show their head, before they become completely operational. CJCS then had presented the JCS view favoring. [

] Conferees felt that our deterrent would keep Khrushchev from firing nuclear missiles. The President speculated why Khrushchev would put missiles in Cuba. Rusk said: To supplement his MRBM capabilities and further his

Berlin objectives. After President left the meeting, SecDef set forth his view that the known missiles would have to be taken out.

CJCS concluded his debrief by saying that the question was whether to go for the missiles or go for missiles as well as blockade, to be followed by possible invasion.

JCS and commanders' discussion followed:

CJCS: In an invasion, we would be playing Khrushchev's game by getting 250,000 troops tied up ashore.

Discussion followed of what targets should be attacked: Must be not only MRBMs but also MiGs, SAMs, patrol boats, tank parks, and all significant military targets, together with a blockade. [

] JCS discarded the 18-day buildup period.

SecDef then joined the meeting: I said this morning that after missiles are operational I was against attacking Cuba because they probably could launch missiles before we destroyed them. SecDef asks JCS whether they would favor attacking under those circumstances; they say yes. SecDef gives the following guidance: Heavy reconnaissance effort is authorized as well as augmentation of air defenses in the Southeastern U.S. I think that three courses of action were open: (1) political moves-- useless; (2) open surveillance and weapons blockade, and if they use missiles we attack-- costly but might be worth the cost; (3) all military action-- might trigger a Soviet response. JCS agreed that the following general war preparatory steps were necessary: SAC on 1/8th airborne alert; disperse those SAC and NORAD aircraft carrying nuclear weapons; move Polaris subs

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from Holy Loch: augment air defenses in the Southeast: [

After SecDef left, CJCS asked whether JCS favored going to low-level reconnaissance flights, which might tip our hand. All said no.

JCS agreed that if the decision was to go for MRBMs only, they would recommend that we not do anything.

Wednesday, 17 October

JCS meeting at 1000; CJCS joined meeting at 1120:

DJS (VADM Riley): SecDef debriefed me on White House meeting at 1900 last night. Five courses of action were proposed. I:

Attack MRBMs plus nuclear storage sites. II: Add to those MiG-21s and II-28s. III: Add to those other air capabilities, SAMs, surface-to-surface missiles, and missile-carrying boats.

IV: attack all significant military targets but exclude tanks, since IV was not prelude to invasion. V: Add tanks to IV.

They talked exclusively about carrying out I, after political operations. The SecDef asked JCS about requirements to carry out these five options. The J-3 worked through the night and came up with this estimate for sorties: I: 52; II: 104; III: 194; IV: 474; V: 2002. (Several days later, because these totals did not explicitly include requirements for escort, suppression of air defenses, and post-strike reconnaissance, these figures had to be substantially revised upward. At that point, Gen. Taylor reacted as follows: "What! These figures were reported to the White House. You are defeating yourselves with your own cleverness, gentlemen.")

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The JCS felt they should go on record as opposing strikes on MRBMs alone. Otherwise, if things went wrong, they might get the blame (see JCSM-794-62).

DJS: CJCS says that whatever is decided it will be a long time before they go to any invasion.

CJCS gives debrief of White House meeting that morning. This was the first small meeting (CJCS, McNamara, Rusk, Ball, Nitze, R. Kennedy, L. Thompson). We all agreed we had no hard positions. State preferred, first, a series of political measures that would minimize damage to the alliance and give Khrushchev an indication of what we planned to do. State also proposed a Kennedy-Khrushchev summit meeting. CJCS thinks they will say there must be some political action before a showdown. It was agreed that if we want to go to a blockade, we must declare war. CJCS adds that blockade is only in the minds of people who feel that striking missile sites alone is not enough.

Thursday, 18 October

JCS meeting at 0930 (Gen. LeMay, previously represented by Gen. McKee, now joined discussions):

DIA officers give results of U-2 mission of 15 October. Photos were shown of four bases: Guanajay; San Julian; San Cristobal; and Santa Cruz. Mr. McLaughlin said it will take six months to make the sites completely operational.

CJCS: Now permanent missile sites show up. This is really significant. I now feel air strikes are not enough, and occupation is the only answer.

CJCS gives debriefing on last night's meeting. Five courses of

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action were considered.

A: Inform West European leaders and some Latin American leaders on Tuesday. On Wednesday, hit missile sites only, make a public statement and send a message to Khrushchev. Then wait and see what happens. Rejected by Rusk.

B: Same as above, but notify Khrushchev about three days beforehand and wait about three days to obtain his reply. Rejected by Defense.

C: Tell them we know where the missiles are and we are going to stop any more from coming in. Then would follow declaration of war, complete blockade, air surveillance, and readiness for additional actions. State is optimistic about this one.

D: After limited political preliminaries, strike all targets except those connected with invasion. Prepare for invasion, possibly blockade.

E: Same as D, with no political preliminaries. There was no support for this, but CJCS feels there may be some stiffening when they see today's intelligence. CJCS says I have changed my mind on invasion, and I think they will too.

JCS agreed that minimum should be Course E, with complete blockade and air strikes on all significant targets except those that might be struck for an invasion.

JCS also agreed that, if a decision is made to hit only the missile sites, 11-28s also should be hit.

JCS meeting at 1400, attended by Operations Deputies:

CJCS debriefs on White House meeting this morning: Rusk said the new information had changed his outlook. Action would have to be taken, and of a heavier kind than was contemplated

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yesterday. But Rusk still thought Khrushchev should be informed in advance. SecDef said that new intelligence called for invasion. In the car, SecDef told CJCS that if he knew there was an operational missile in Cuba, it would change his outlook since we would have to go nuclear. Three plans were being considered: (1) maximum political effort; (2) a combination with military effort being built around blockade then reconnaissance; (3) no political discussion-- air strike followed by invasion. Plan (1) is out. CJCS said he asked the President if we could discard the partial air strike. We agreed to do Category III, IV, or V (see 17 Oct, 1000 meeting). Next State proposed a five-day preliminary, talking to Khrushchev, UN and OAS; then clamp on blockade and state of war. The President seemed to feel we should hold back until we get a feel for the Russian reaction.

CSAF: Are we really going to do anything except talk?

CJCS: Definitely. Probably there will be a political approach followed by warning, a blockade, hitting the missiles, and invasion-- in that order. We will probably start in the early part of next week.

Friday, 19 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

CJCS gives a debrief of White House meeting on the previous evening: The tendency is more and more toward political actions plus a blockade; the President shows a preference for this. State will provide the details of political approaches. The JCS will consider total blockade, selective blockade, and

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the necessity for a declaration of war. State's idea is that there should be a selective blockade for offensive weapons only. CSAF: "It would be pure disaster to try that."

CJCS: The President wants to see us this morning. It boils down to a choice between Course E (above) and the new alternative of political action plus blockade. We should recommend to him (1) surprise attack on comprehensive targets, (2) reconnaissance surveillance, and (3) complete blockade.

A briefing was given by DIA: There are 35-39 MiG 21s and 21 Ti-28s (17 still in crates). There are 7 MRBM sites (4 are for SS-4s with 1100 n.m. range; 3 are for SS-5s with 2200 n.m. range); there are 16 launchers for SS-4s and 12 for SS-5s, with two missiles each. There are 22 SAM sites, 9 believed operational. In just a few weeks, they can have a couple of air defense nets with real capability.

The JCS position decided upon for the meeting with the President was:

1. Notify Macmillan and possibly Adenauer two hours in advance.
2. Carry out a surprise attack on comprehensive targets.
3. Reconnaissance surveillance.
4. Complete blockade.
5. Invade Cuba? CSA, CSAF and CNO say yes: CJCS says only be prepared to do so.
6. Realize there will be a strain upon and NATO and problems about Berlin.

JCS meeting at 1400:

CJCS gives a debrief on a meeting at the State Dept. that morning: R. Kennedy thought we should say nothing but simply

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go ahead and make that attack and then go to the OAS. State said that we could never get two-thirds approval from the OAS unless we went to it first. CJCS says that conferees split into two teams to prepare their cases: Red team favoring blockade, Blue team favoring attack. The Blue Team consisted of R. Kennedy, Douglas Dillon, McGeorge Bundy, Dean Acheson, and John McCone.

CJCS related that R. Kennedy said that from here on out, if we make a surprise attack, we will be accused of another Pearl Harbor. So would you be willing to accept a 24-hour delay in order to inform the allies? CSAF and CNO said yes; CJCS agreed with them.

Saturday, 20 October

JCS meeting at 1000:

CJCS said that the President might want to hit them as early as tomorrow morning. He proposes sending a memo strongly recommending against a hasty attack on offensive weapons; it should be launched on 23 Oct and include all offensive weapons and supporting defenses. JCS agreed.

Briefing by Gen. Quinn of DIA: One regiment on 1020 n.m. missiles is near San Cristobal and is operational now. Each site has eight missiles and four launchers. There is another regiment with two sites in the Sagua la Grande area; these will be operational within one week. The 2000 mile RBMs could be operational within six weeks; there are four launchers at two fixed sites. Operational SAM sites have risen to 16. There is no evidence of nuclear warheads in Cuba.

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CNO: We are dividing the Pentagon into two teams. Blue with McNamara, Taylor and Gilpatric will review surprise attack scenarios. Blue with Anderson, Yarmolinsky, Griffin, Shoup and McNaughton will consider blockade. In taking leadership of the Blue Team, CNO said he protested to the SecDef that this would locking the barn door after the horse had been stolen. Blockade would not accomplish the objective, was not in the US interest, would be imposed after the missiles had been emplaced, and would bring a confrontation with the Soviet Union rather than Cuba. It would incur the danger of attacks on Guantanamo and US shipping in the Florida Strait, and left the possibility of missiles being launched from Cuba.

BG Lucius Clay (Dep Director, J-3): I have just come from a meeting at State attended by Cabinet members and some others. They are considering two courses: (1) limited blockade followed by an air strike three days later; (2) limited blockade followed by negotiations. Consensus is that we will have to go through political shenanigans, followed by blockade and then air strike. UN Ambassador Adlai Stevenson is strong for blockade less POL.

CJCS rejoins the meeting at 1230: President will preside at a White House meeting this afternoon. The SecDef wants an in-between plan: a five-day blockade and then strike. CJCS says he will tell the President that we have every reasonable chance of hitting all those missiles. If we wait, they'll have time to hide them.

JCS meeting at 1815:

CJCS debrief on White House meeting that afternoon: "This was

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not one of our better days." After a two-hour discussion, the decisive votes were cast by Rusk, McNamara and Adlai Stevenson. Decision is to draw up plans for a blockade, to take effect 24 hours after the President's TV speech on the evening of the 21st or 22nd. OAS approval should be obtained during the 24-hour interval. The blockade will concern offensive weapons; POL probably will be added during the week. We should be prepared to execute an air strike against missile only (1) without warning on Monday or Tuesday or (2) after 24 hours' notice. The rationale is that we don't want a Pearl Harbor on the American record, and we want to protect unprepared allies against retaliation. We also talked about possible negotiations with the Soviets about giving up missile in Italy and Turkey, and using Polaris subs in the Mediterranean as a substitute. The President said to me, "I know that you and your colleagues are unhappy with the decision, but I trust that you will support me in this decision." I assured him that we were against the decision but would back him completely.

CSA: "I never thought I'd live to see the day when I would want to go to war."

Sunday, 21 October

JCS meeting at 1300:

JCS: Gen. Sweeney and I saw the President this morning. Sweeney said he needed an additional 150 planes to get the missiles and 500 planes for the whole job. The President said if we make the strike we will do the whole job. What are the

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chances of getting the known targets?

CSAF: 90 percent.

CNO: The President's speech is solid for Monday night.

CJCS: How soon after that will the blockade begin?

CNO: State wants to make it indefinite, so as to get OAS reaction first. I said if they wanted 24 hours, all right.

CAPT Houser brought a memo from the DepSecDef into the JCS meeting: The President wants to be sure that Jupiters in Turkey and Italy are not fired without his authorization, even in the event of a Soviet nuclear or non-nuclear attack on those units.

JCS reply is JCSM-800-62, opposing any further steps.

JCS meeting at 1715:

Debrief of a White House meeting that began at 1430:

CJCS: CNO and I attended.

CNO: It was agreed that the President's speech was too precise on the numbers of missiles and launchers (5-6 MRBM sites, 32 missiles; 2 IRBM sites, 16 missiles). Also, we will call this a quarantine rather than a blockade; then we could escalate to a blockade. References in the draft to horrors of war will be toned down, and direct references to West Berlin eliminated.

All Services and the Joint Staff were instructed to shorten from 7 to 5 days the period for execution of OPLAN 316.

CJCS: "The Pearl Harbor complex has affected the good people at the White House.... There will be no air strike, but it is in the offing."

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Monday, 22 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

Briefing by Gen. Carroll (Director, DIA): Of the six mobile MRBM sites, four are operational and the other two will be so within 3 to 5 days. Of the two fixed IRBM sites, one will be available for emergencies by 15 November and fully operational by 1 December. The other two will be in emergency operation by 1 December, with a full capability by 15 December.

JCS meeting with SecDef at 1330:

JCS: Some decisions were made at lunch (1/8th airborne alert for SAC, dispersal of B-47s and CONAD interceptors). [

] the time of the President's speech.

SecDef: The President wants a message sent to USCINCEUR saying in effect, make sure the Jupiter warheads in Turkey and Italy are not released if missiles come under attack, and if they are in danger of being taken by our angry allies, destroy them.

SecDef: The President asked for our views on how we should respond if the Cubans launched a missile, authorized or not.

DepSecDef: We won't know if it came from Cuba.

SecDef: Right; it could come from a submarine. I think we should tell the Soviets we will hold them responsible and fire missiles in retaliation. What we want is for the Soviets to send out a message like the one we just sent out to USCINCEUR. (See Msg, JCS 5866 to USCINCEUR)

CNO disagreed: a public warning to the Soviets would bring strongly adverse allied reactions. JCS agree we should not say exactly what our retaliation would be.

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JCS meeting at 1620:

VADM Sharp (Deputy CNO, Plans and Policy): The President doesn't want us to take overt steps indicating that we are getting ready for invasion. Thus requisitioning ships is out. We wanted 111 ships: 30 in one day; 50 more in 10; 31 in 12 days.

Gen. McKee (Vice CSAF): DepSecDef said there would be no callup of C-119s and interceptors in view of what the President said.

CJCS: If we can't lick the Cubans with what we already have, we are in terrible shape.

Tuesday, 23 October

JCS meeting at 0900 (GJCS and SecDef were attending a meeting of the NSC Executive Committee at the White House):

JCS decided that low-level reconnaissance was necessary. Then the SecDef called from the White House to ask how many flights were wanted. They replied that six were needed to cover the MRBM sites. The CJCS telephoned approval from the White house at 1057.

The JCS also discussed how to react to a U-2 shootdown. They agreed that, if a U-2 was downed, 1-2 flights daily should continue until another U-2 loss occurred. Then, determine whether the projected attrition rate was acceptable. If so, continue the flights. If not, attack all SAM sites and then resume U-2 flights. But, at 1125, CJCS brought back somewhat different guidance from the White House. This was sent via Msg. JCS 6958 to CINCLANT, 241922Z Oct 62.

CJCS debrief of ExComm meeting: President approved extension of

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tours of duty for Army and Marine Corps personnel. SecDef told the President that authority to requisition shipping was not needed today; he also said that S-Day (beginning of air strikes) would be the right time for the C-119 callup.

JCS meeting at 1400:

CNO: SecDef says that the quarantine will be imposed effective 241400Z. Message directing the generation of SAC forces will not be dispatched until the Quarantine Proclamation is made public (see Msg, JCS 6917 to CINCSAC, 232306Z Oct 62).

Wednesday, 24 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

CJCS debriefs on ExComm meeting at 1800 last night: President was concerned about the problem of stopping a ship that did not want to be boarded. Will the Navy fight its way on board? The President always wants to be ready to send a battalion-size probe up the Berlin autobahn within two hours. The SecDef doesn't think we know enough about ship movements: where they are, what each is doing, and the pattern. He wants a recommendation on this.

CJCS says SecDef has photos of crowded Florida airfields.

Should the planes disperse?

CSAF: Let's stay on concrete and not go to the dirt. There are 450 planes, 150 per field.

JCS agreed to send the SecDef a memo saying that the tactical advantages of having units positioned forward far offset the risks of loss in a surprise attack.

CJCS: Are you going to announce a quarantine line and pick up

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ships as they cross it?

CNO: We will pick them all up, and not announce a line.

CNO: President and SecDef believe we are generating forces to be ready for invasion seven days from yesterday, but we have never sent the message out. JCS agree that the message should now be sent.

Around 1030, a report came in that three Soviet ships were turning back from the intercept line.

Thursday, 25 October

JCS meeting at 0900, attended by SecDef:

SecDef: I talked to the President and evidently things are going fine; the Soviets apparently have accepted our quarantine. All except one passenger, five tanker and five cargo ships have turned around; the tanker Bucharest identified herself when asked. What to do next? I suggest we establish the boarding precedent by boarding, say, a British ship and, immediately thereafter, board a Soviet ship, preferably one carrying offensive weapons. The only ship let through thus far is a Greek tanker.

SecDef: Do the JCS favor boarding two ships today (one non-Soviet Bloc, one Bloc) and beginning low-level surveillance today?

Gen. Burchinal (Dep CSAF, Plans & Programs): A Cubana airliner passed through Goose Bay, Labrador with aircraft spares aboard and has now reached Havana.

SecDef: I saw no air blockade today. (He and CJCS then left for a White House meeting)

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CNO, some time later: We have just been authorized to board a non-Bloc ship. When we report back they will authorize boarding a Bloc ship.

CSAF, at about 1040: CJCS just called me to say they had authorized eight flights for today, including low-level reconnaissance. Also, the criteria of targets have been changed: F-4s, MiGs, KOMARs, targets of opportunity, SAMs, surface-to-surface missiles.

CNO: New instructions have been telephoned by DepSecDef: (1) do not stop or harass the Bucharest, just trail it; (2) stop a non-Bloc ship today; (3) stop and board the Grozny.

CJCS returned from the ExComm meeting at 1200 and debriefed: Last week they were talking like the blockade would bring down Castro. Now Rusk is saying that that the blockade is only to keep out offensive weapons and if we do that we have accomplished the mission.

JCS meeting at 1400:

CJCS: I lunched with the SecDef, and he is not for pushing an air blockade. SecDef said it is OK for the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade to sail from the West Coast, using cover story about "going on maneuvers."

LGEM Wm. Blanchard (Inspector General, USAF) reported on the status of air defenses and airfields seen on his visit to Florida: Air defense is formidable and good; it wasn't so two days ago. There are 250 fighters in Florida; HAWKs are unloading in Key West and Homestead AFB. In Cuba there are 100 MiGs and 11 B-26s. As of last night, SAC aircraft are all out of Florida bases. (See MFR, "Summary of Presentation by LTG

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Blanchard to JCS on 25 October Concerning Air Force Posture in Florida")

Friday, 26 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

CJCS debriefs on White House meeting the previous evening:

There is enthusiasm for round-the-clock reconnaissance to find out if work on the sites is going on at night.

CNO: We are getting ready for the Grozny tomorrow. Right now she is lying dead in the water; the ship is supposed to have missile fuel.

CJCS: The SecDef is anxious to act on grabbing a Russian ship; State would be happy not to.

JCS instruct CINCLANT to abandon OPLAN 314 and concentrate on OPLAN 316.

JCS meeting at 1400:

CJCS debriefs on White House meeting: No air reconnaissance tonight. It was decided not to add POL to the quarantine list. They feel we are off to a very good start. The White House's present concept is to carry out a limited attack upon six missile sites and the II-28s, the objective being the lowest level of force at the lowest possible price.

CM-55-62 lists four concepts for JCS consideration and calculation about sorties required:

I: Limited attack above, favored by SecDef.

II: Destroy or neutralize all MRBMs, favored by SecTreasury.

III: Render all SAM sites inoperable, suggested by CJCS.

IV: Attack all offensive weapons, the JCS recommendation.

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Saturday, 27 October

JCS meeting at 0900 (CJCS left to attend White House meeting);
Briefing at 1000 by Gen. Carroll and Mr. Hughes of DIA: There
is evidence of possible Soviet ground forces with modern
equipment, of continued construction at MRBM sites, and of
surface-to-surface missiles among the Soviet equipment.

Gen. Carroll: AsstSecDef Nitze called me yesterday. The SecDef
was in Rusk's office. Rusk was requesting advice from experts
who were to go to New York today to advise Amb. Stevenson on
how to get and present evidence, particularly how to certify
that devices have been rendered inoperable and how to inspect
to see that this is the case. The inference was that
inspection should be by photo interpretation.

CJCS called from White House: Eight flights authorized this
morning, eight more this afternoon.

CSAF: We should write a simple paper taking the latest
intelligence into account, and again recommending execution of
full-scale OPLAN 312 followed by OPLAN 316.

Drafting of a paper begins.

JCS meeting, 1330-2000 (SecDef attended from 1330-1420):

DJS tables a paper recommending early and timely execution of
OPLAN 312 with readiness to execute OPLAN 316.

SecDef: I want the Joint Staff to prepare two plans. First,
move one Polaris off the Turkish coast before we hit Cuba,
telling the Russians before they have a chance to hit Turkey.
Second, assume we hit the missiles in Cuba and Soviets then
attack the Jupiters and knock them out; I think this is a very

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real possibility.

Turning to the paper tabled by the DJS, SecDef asked exactly what was meant by "early and timely execution of OPLAN 312"?

CSAF: Attacking Sunday or Monday.

SecDef: Do JCS agree upon attack at first light?

CMC: No.

CJCS: Would you agree that, if there is no stoppage in missile work, Chiefs recommend a strike after a reasonable period of time?

SecDef: I would accept that statement. You don't have to say how long. But I would not have accepted a recommendation for attack "now."

SecDef: CSAF has just learned that a U-2 is lost off Alaska; I must tell Rusk at once. SecDef leaves at 1341, returns five minutes later.

Col. Steakley (Joint Reconnaissance Group, J-3) enters at 1403 to say that a U-2 overflying Cuba is 30-40 minutes overdue.

At 1416, SecDef and CJCS left for a White House conference.

JCS then turned to the DJS draft. CSAF and Adm. Ricketts (VCNO) favor executing OPLAN 312 on Sunday morning or Monday morning at the latest, unless there is positive proof of dismantling. CSA and CMC agree. They also want to add a passage about executing OPLAN 316. For agreed-upon wording, see JCSM-844-62. This recommendation was transmitted to the White House, where CJCS read it to the ExComm.

Col. Steakley reports on pilot debriefings at 1800: All but two planes were fired at. Intercept says the Cubans have recovered body and wreckage of the U-2.

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At 1830, CJCS gives debrief of White House meeting: He reads President's reply to Khrushchev. CJCS says President has been seized with the idea of trading Turkish for Cuban missiles; he seems to be the only one in favor of it. "The President has a feeling that time is running out." I read the Chiefs' memo to the meeting, saying that we should attack no later than 29 October. Then we got word of the U-2 loss. No air reconnaissance tonight, but everyone feels we should undertake reconnaissance tomorrow, so as to get a better background for attack on Cuba.

CJCS: Should we take out a SAM site?

CSAF: No, we would open ourselves to retaliation. We have little to gain and a lot to lose.

CSA: I feel the same way. Khrushchev may loose one of his missiles on us.

CJCS: Gentlemen, you all recommended retaliation if a U-2 was downed. If this was wise on the 23rd, it should be just as wise on the 27th. (Note: This is not an accurate recollection of the JCS position on 23 Oct)

CSA: Intelligence this morning showed concrete pads; I'm afraid they have nuclear weapons there.

JCS agreed: There should be no U-2 flights tomorrow, but there has to be some kind of reconnaissance tomorrow. If an attack is to be made on Monday, there is no need for further reconnaissance.

Briefing at 1940 by Mr. Hughes of DIA: Photoygraphy from today's missions show that the canvas is off the launchers, that the missiles are on the launchers, and that a reload

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capability is ready.

Reconnaissance decision was made later that night: A C-97 with fighter escort would do peripheral photography without getting in range of SAMs.

Sunday, 28 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

CSAF: I want to see the President later today, and I hope all of you will come with me. Monday will be the last time to attack the missiles before they become fully operational.

CJCS: If you want a meeting, I will put in your request.

CSA: My people tell me that all MRBM sites are now operational. If the warheads are with the missiles, they can be made ready to fire in 2 1/2 to 5 hours.

JCS discuss the low-level reconnaissance plan for today: six planes going over sites not defended by antiaircraft artillery, so they will not cover MRBM sites.

At about 0930, a tickertape of Moscow Radio's broadcast was passed around: "[appreciate your assurance that the United States will not invade Cuba. Hence we have ordered our officers to stop building bases, dismantle the equipment, and bring it back home. This can be done under UN supervision."

SecDef, DepSecDef and AsstSecDef Nitze joined the meeting.

CSAF: The Soviets may make a charade of withdrawal and keep some weapons in Cuba.

CNO: The no-invasion pledge leaves Castro free to make trouble in Latin America.

SecDef, DepSecDef and AsstSecDef reply that withdrawal of

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missiles leaves the US in a much stronger position than the USSR.

SecDef: Before Khrushchev's message came in, I was considering additional actions to pressure the Soviets: extend tours of Army and Air Force personnel; set up a submarine intercept zone; add POL to the contraband list; and requisition shipping. CSAF still wants to go to the White House, but other JCS members decide to wait and see whether reconnaissance flights meet opposition and what their pictures show.

Monday, 29 October

JCS meeting at 1400, attended in part by SecDef:

SecDef: There is no Cuba-Turkey deal at present, but problem of removing Jupiters from Turkey and probably Italy on grounds of obsolescence soon will require attention.

CJCS gives guidance resulting from latest ExComm meeting: President wants a paper describing the effects of advanced Soviet ground equipment upon an invasion, with casualty estimates. (Response is CM-85-62, 2 Nov) US representatives at the UN do not expect the UN to take over inspection and surveillance as quickly as Washington hopes. One solution suggested is reconnaissance flights by C-130s manned by Indonesian crews. The White House believes Khrushchev is going to stand behind his offer, but sober recognition of problems to be worked out has replaced the initial exhilaration.

SecDef guidance: The US should do nothing that would suggest to the Soviets that our readiness posture is being reduced.

SecDef favors continued US air reconnaissance but doubts

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flights will be authorized after today, so he favors quick institution of UN reconnaissance.

Tuesday, 30 October

JCS meeting at 1400:

Briefing by DIA: Yesterday's photography covered 14 of the 24 launch pad areas. 13 of 14 erectors have been moved out of position. This is not positive evidence of dismantling. Moving erectors out does not mean firing capability is degraded.

Wednesday, 31 October

JCS meeting at 0900:

DIA briefing on photo readout: Construction continues in at least two launching sites, and extreme effort is being extended on extensive camouflage.

CJCS tables State Dept's draft instructions to the UN delegation about verifying missiles' withdrawal, then leaves for White House meeting.

JCS were particularly disturbed that State's draft had no provision for follow-on guarantees against the reintroduction of offensive weapons. JCS telephoned this to CJCS at the White House. When CJCS returned, he said additions probably would be made. (Note: Msg, SecState 1147 to USUN, 31 Oct, was amended by Msg, SecState 1153 to USUN, 31 Oct)

CJCS also said the President had agreed to resume reconnaissance flights on 1 November. (Note: Flights had been ended during UN Secretary General U Thant's visit to Cuba October)

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Thursday, 1 November

JCS meeting at 1400:

CJCS debrief on ExComm meeting that morning: Authorization for reconnaissance flights today as obtained only with difficulty. Amb. Stevenson in NY was objecting, but the SecDef made a strong and successful presentation.

CSA relates guidance given by the President yesterday: He wants forces to be of such size that an operation against Cuba can be executed swiftly. It is a matter of prestige, and he feared there might be a tough fight. President feared that, if we bogged down in Cuba like the British in the Boer War, people would ask why we had forces in the US that were not being committed. If more troops are needed, President is willing to take a chance about degrading capability for a Berlin contingency. If trouble did develop, he would authorize the use of tactical weapons in Europe immediately.

CJCS: President knows I disagree with him, but he seems very uneasy about it. I will discuss this with him.

Wednesday, 7 November

JCS meeting at 0900:

CSA reports on his visit to Army units in the field: I have never seen more impressive and imaginative training.

Certainly, we could never be more ready.

Briefing by DIA: Thirty missile transporters have come into port areas. However, the assembly of II-28s is continuing; four bombers are now totally assembled. We also know that the

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Soviets took over the air defense of Cuba as of yesterday.

CJCS: At the ExComm meeting at 1700 yesterday, I said it was "now or never" for intensive reconnaissance if we wanted to know whether the missiles are actually loaded aboard the ships. Rusk opposed increased reconnaissance for political reasons. He won, and now verification is up to the Navy. The JCS recommended five U-2 flights and 14 low-level flights (an increase over the current level) to cover ports, the Isle of Pines, and seven caves suspected of being weapon storage sites.

CSA: I talked to the President about OPLAN 316, and he brought up the same points that were in his memo of 5 November. He was concerned lest there be mistaken optimism "that one Yankee could always lick ten Gringos." (sic) The public would never understand if we got a bloody nose in Cuba while there were three divisions in the United States.

CSAF: Air attacks alone would cause Castro's popular support to collapse and make the invasion a "walk-in."

Friday, 9 November

JCS meeting at 0900:

JCS concurred in a paper by AsstSecDef Nitze on "Long Term Surveillance Requirements." There would be complete high-level coverage every 30 days plus either low-level flights or on-site inspections of suspicious locations. Concurrence was telephoned to Nitze.

CJCS asks: Would you rather have the II-28s out of Cuba and a no-invasion guarantee given, or have the II-28s remain and do

not give any guarantee?

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JCS say they favor the latter.

CJCS: There is a feeling that the President owes something to Khrushchev for taking the missiles out. I think we will probably wind up keeping surveillance but lifting the quarantine and taking away the no-invasion guarantee.

Monday, 12 November

JCS meeting at 0900:

CJCS: The SecDef is talking about extending the blockade progressively to achieve withdrawal of the 11-28s and other aims. But Ambassador at Large Thompson thinks such moves would be very tough on Khrushchev.

CSAF wants a meeting between the JCS and the President; other JCS members concur.

After CJCS left for a White House meeting, Service Chiefs continued the discussion. They laid out a course of disengaging the Soviets, making the 11-28s a Cuba-US-OAS problem, then going to air attack and invasion.

Tuesday, 13 November

JCS meeting at 0900:

CJCS gives debriefing on the ExComm meeting of 12 November: At the morning meeting, Amb. Stevenson and Mr. McCloy said that the U.S. should present a negotiating package now, before the Soviet position solidifies. They recommended removing the quarantine and giving a no-invasion pledge in return for withdrawal of 11-28s and warheads. Rusk opposes offering the

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package immediately. What if the Soviets reject this package? SecDef favors a blockade, including POL, and continued surveillance. The President opposed the SecDef, feeling that continued surveillance would be dangerous; President was alone in feeling this way. At the afternoon meeting, all agreed that the quarantine should be lifted if Khrushchev pledges withdrawal in, say, 30 days.

The JCS will meet with the President on 16 Nov.

JCS meeting at 1400:

CJCS gives a debrief of the ExComm meeting on the morning of 13 Nov: President was absent. The SecDef proposed:

1. If the Soviets agreed to remove the II-28s, the U.S. would lift the quarantine, continue unannounced air surveillance, and withhold a no-invasion pledge until suitable safeguards are agreed upon (e.g., some international presence in Cuba and a reciprocal feature of inspection of suspected refugee training areas in Central America.)

2. If the Soviets refuse to withdraw II-28s, continue a limited quarantine by boarding first Free World and finally Soviet ships, continue unannounced air surveillance, and treat the no-invasion promise as not being in effect.

Then ExComm members were shown a copy of Khrushchev's latest letter: The II-28s were obsolete and manned by Soviet not Cuban pilots. But, if the U.S. insists, you can take a gentleman's word that they will be removed after we solve our other problems, which are: (1) removal of the quarantine; (2) mutual pledges in the Security Council; (3) guarantee of the sovereignty of Cuban air space and a no-invasion pledge; and

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(4) a post in the Caribbean for UN inspection, which would include denuclearization.

Thursday, 15 November

JCS meeting at 1300:

A J-5 Talking Paper for the meeting with the President is tabled. The CJCS criticizes it as being full of platitudes and condescending: "We're saying, 'Now see here, young man, here is what we want you to do'." The CJCS then read a Talking Paper of his own. The JCS agreed that it should be used as the framework for their discussion with the President.

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